



Statement from UW System Shared Governance Groups on Recent Budget Cuts, New COVID-19 Funding, and Preparations for the 2021-23 State Budget

Public Representation Organization of the (UW-Madison) Faculty Senate (PROFS)
Academic Staff Professionals Representation Organization (ASPRO)
Associated Students of Madison (ASM)

Our groups represent and comprise faculty, staff, and students at UW-Madison and across the UW System. We call on all who have an influence on the University of Wisconsin System to remember that the UW System is the economic engine for the state.

The financial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have caused significant uncertainty as the UW System prepares to reopen its universities in the fall and works on its 2021-23 biennial budget request. The UW System and the state must also respond to the very important demands for racial justice resulting from the deaths of George Floyd and others.

Even in the face of this uncertainty and unrest, we remind members of the Board of Regents, the UW System Administration, and our legislators and governor, that the University of Wisconsin System should be a funding priority for the people of the state. Please keep these facts in mind:

- The UW System provides the people of the state, and people from across the globe, with both the liberal arts education necessary to solve problems and think critically, and the technological and professional skills required to prevent the spread of disease, create the technology of the future, and address health, education, and other inequities.
- The UW System educates the next generation of leaders, conducts the cutting-edge research across virtually all fields of study, and provides expertise to businesses, organizations, and local governments across the state and the country.
- For every dollar the state invests in the UW System, UW System returns 23 dollars to the Wisconsin economy. (Source: 2018 UW System Economic Impact Study, NorthStar Analytics)
- State tax dollar or General Purpose Revenue (GPR) support for the UW System has declined steadily since UW System was created both in terms of overall GPR funding and GPR appropriations per FTE student. (Source: UW-Madison Professor Nicholas Hillman and the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau)

We were very surprised to learn that the UW System was asked to shoulder \$40.7 million of the first \$70 million state budget cut resulting from COVID-19. In other words, 58% of the state's budget cut came from UW System, which receives just over 6% of overall state spending. We are struggling to comprehend how this possibly made sense.

As we move forward, we hope we can all agree on these principles:

- Additional GPR cuts need to be kept to a minimum. At the very least, cuts to the UW System should be commensurate with the UW System's share of overall state spending.
- We strongly support new funding to deal with COVID-19, but new funding should not come at the same time we are enduring other major cuts. It makes no sense to "rob Peter to pay Paul."
- With UW tuition for in-state students frozen for eight years, it is time to either return tuition authority to the Board of Regents or ensure that funding is provided to UW System that at least offsets the revenue loss from the freeze.
- UW System and its universities should have the authority to borrow money, an authority nearly all our peers have, as well as the authority to issue bonds, to fund capital and other projects.

We believe that making an investment in the University of Wisconsin System is an easy choice. We call on the Board of Regents and UW System leadership, and the state's elected representatives, to ensure that the UW System's funding is not so significantly diminished that it cannot operate effectively for the people of Wisconsin.

As advocates for and practitioners of shared governance, we welcome the opportunity to work with UW System leaders, university leaders, the governor, and legislators to make sure budget decisions make sense. It is essential that we all work together to keep the state's economic engine producing results for the people of Wisconsin. We look forward to helping make this happen.

Sincerely,

Michael Bernard-Donals, President
Public Representation Organization of the Faculty Senate (PROFS)

Andrea Cool, President
Academic Staff Professionals Representation Organization (ASPRO)

Laura Downer, Chair
Associated Students of Madison (ASM)